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doctors with a kindness, a tolerance and large understanding, the skill of hand, the skill of mind and the resourcefulness of a past generation. Where are the successors of van Swieten, John Hunter and Benjamin Rush or, in more modern terms, of Neusser, Osler and Billings? The Greek world sank as it grew in democratic principle—not in the abstract principle of democracy but in the concrete expression of it which substituted for its earlier rulers, proficient in the arts and sciences, the ever increasing number of non-productive Athenian traders. Is the efficiency of modern medical practice riding to a similar fall? Let us be honest with ourselves. If medicine fails it can not be ascribed to our stars, for our time, as all ages before it, in the hour of sickness and death cries as did Jeremiah: "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?"

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ALEXANDER SMITH

FROM Edinburgh, Scotland, his birthplace, comes the news of the death of Professor Alexander Smith, lately head of the chemistry department at Columbia University. While this termination of the long and insidious illness which clouded his latter days was not unexpected, his loss is a heavy one for chemistry.

His circle of influence was perhaps widest as a text-book writer. Someone has remarked that a pre-eminent elementary text-book in any science appears but once in a generation. In his generation, Alexander Smith's elementary text-books have been the pre-eminent ones in this country, and, in their various foreign translations, have become well known abroad. When Smith was president of the American Chemical Society in 1911, an after-dinner speaker referred in his remarks to Smith's clear and sparkling eye, which, as those who knew him will recollect, was a very conspicuous and characteristic feature of his. Now, the same two epithets, clear and sparkling, might very properly be applied to his text-books in part explanation of their unrivaled position in the text-book field.

Smith's teaching work in this country was begun at Wabash College, whence, in 1894, he went to Chicago, at which place his teaching methods were chiefly developed. He was intensely active here also in administrative work both within, and, as dean of the junior college of science, beyond his own department; but had still abundant energy in reserve to continue investigative work. The researches on sulfur and on vapor pressures, for which, in 1912, he was awarded the Keith Prize by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, will recur to the minds of most chemists. In 1911 he migrated to Columbia University as head of the department of chemistry, which he proceeded to reorganize very fundamentally, energizing progress with his overflowing vitality until forced by illness to desist.

Truly, his spark was a brilliant one, but all too short-lived.

ALAN W. C. MENZIES

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE COST OF RESEARCH WORK

THE report of the British Scientific and Industrial Research Department for the year which ended on July 31 last has been published. According to an abstract in the London *Times*, it is divided into two sections, the first, which is signed by Lord Balfour, being the report of the committee of the Privy Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, and the second, signed by the administrative chairman, Sir William S. McCormick, that of the Advisory Council.

The first section is largely concerned with financial detail. The total expenditure of the department during the financial year was £525,584, made up of £273,193 from the Exchequer, £65,358 interest on the capital fund of one million for the formation of research associations, £86,355 from the same fund, and £100,677 from fees for tests and special investigations carried out for outside bodies, from the contributions of the shipbuilding industry for research in the Froude tank, and from repayments by the fighting services for research undertaken directly for them. Deducting the last item and also the grants from the million capital fund, the actual net expenditure of the